

Albert Yonathan Setyawan

VARIATIONS
ON SYMMETRY

31 Oct - 15 Dec 2019

ALBERT YONATHAN SETYAWAN

Albert Yonathan Setyawan (b. 1983, Indonesia) graduated from Bandung Institute of Technology with an MFA in Ceramics in 2012. Following that, he moved to Kyoto, Japan, to continue his research and training in contemporary ceramic art at Kyoto Seika University where he is a doctoral degree candidate. He has participated in several critically acclaimed group and solo exhibitions in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Italy, and Japan. In 2013, he was one of the artists in the Indonesian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale. His recent

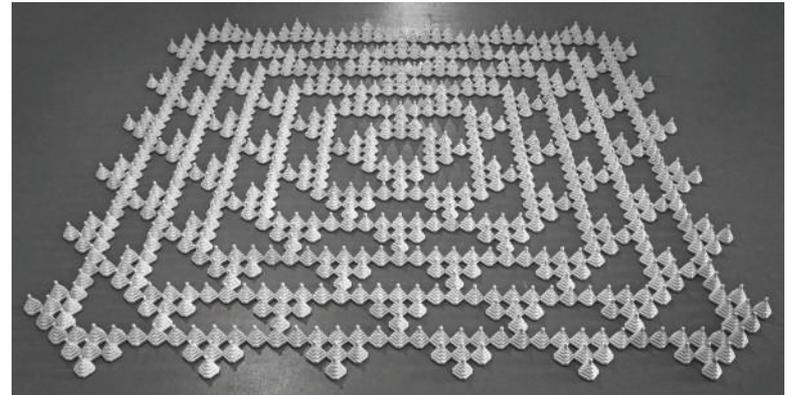
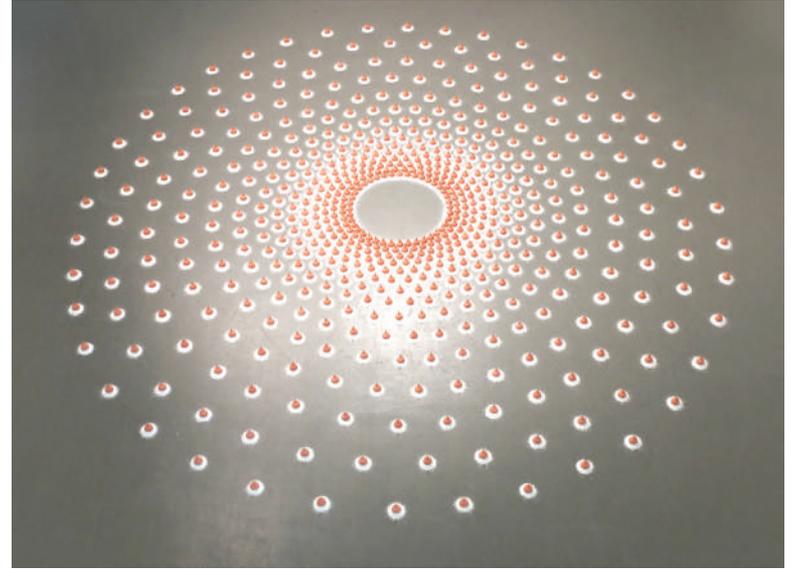
major exhibitions include *Contemporary Worlds: Indonesia* at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia (2019); *SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now* at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2017), which also travelled to Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, Taiwan (2019); Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2018 at Tokamachi, Niigata, Japan (2018); and *TERRENE* at POLA Museum Annex, Tokyo, Japan (2017). Setyawan has undertaken artist residencies at

Canberra's Strathnairn Arts Association, Australia (2016); and The Japan Foundation at Shigaraki Ceramics Cultural Park, Shigaraki, Japan (2009). His works are in the collections of Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; Museum of Modern Ceramic Art in Gifu, Japan; POLA Museum Annex, Tokyo, Japan; OHD Museum in Magelang, Indonesia; Tumurun Museum, Solo, Indonesia; and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia. Albert Yonathan Setyawan lives and works between Kyoto and Tokyo, Japan.

Variations on Symmetry

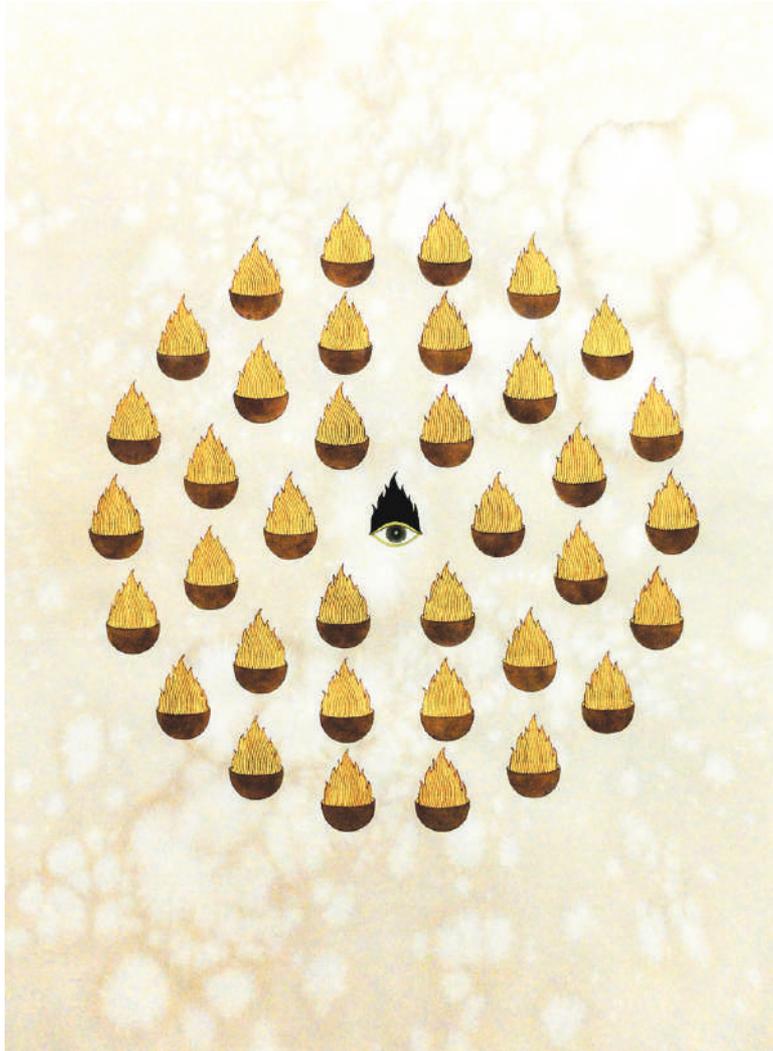
By Albert Yonathan Setyawan

This text describes some ideas that have inspired my artistic practice over the past twelve years, as illustrated by some images contained in this catalogue of selected works since 2007. Twelve of these recent works are exhibited in this show. I continue to find these ideas fascinating and inspiring. I discovered these ideas at different times throughout the years and have articulated them in different forms, using different mediums such as ceramics, drawing, installation, performance, and video documentation. I offer them here as interconnecting points with no hierarchical or categorical order, just a set of ideas that have significance for me.



Top to bottom:
Mandala Study #4, 2015,
terracotta and marble sand, variable dimensions,
collection of OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia

Mandala Study #3, 2015,
ceramic, 300 x 300 cm,
private collection, Singapore

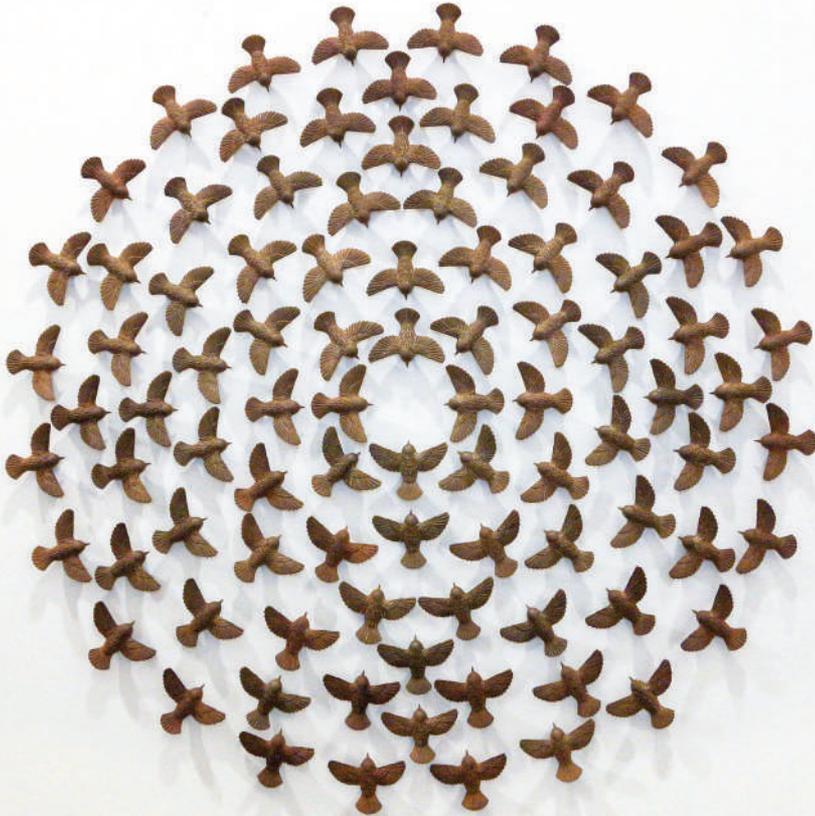


Left to right:
Burning Bowls
2016
gouache, watercolour, and ink on paper
73 x 54 cm
collection of POLA Museum Annex,
Tokyo, Japan

Flaming Tower
2016
gouache, watercolour, and ink on paper
208 x 37 cm
collection of POLA Museum Annex,
Tokyo, Japan



Meditation as artistic practice

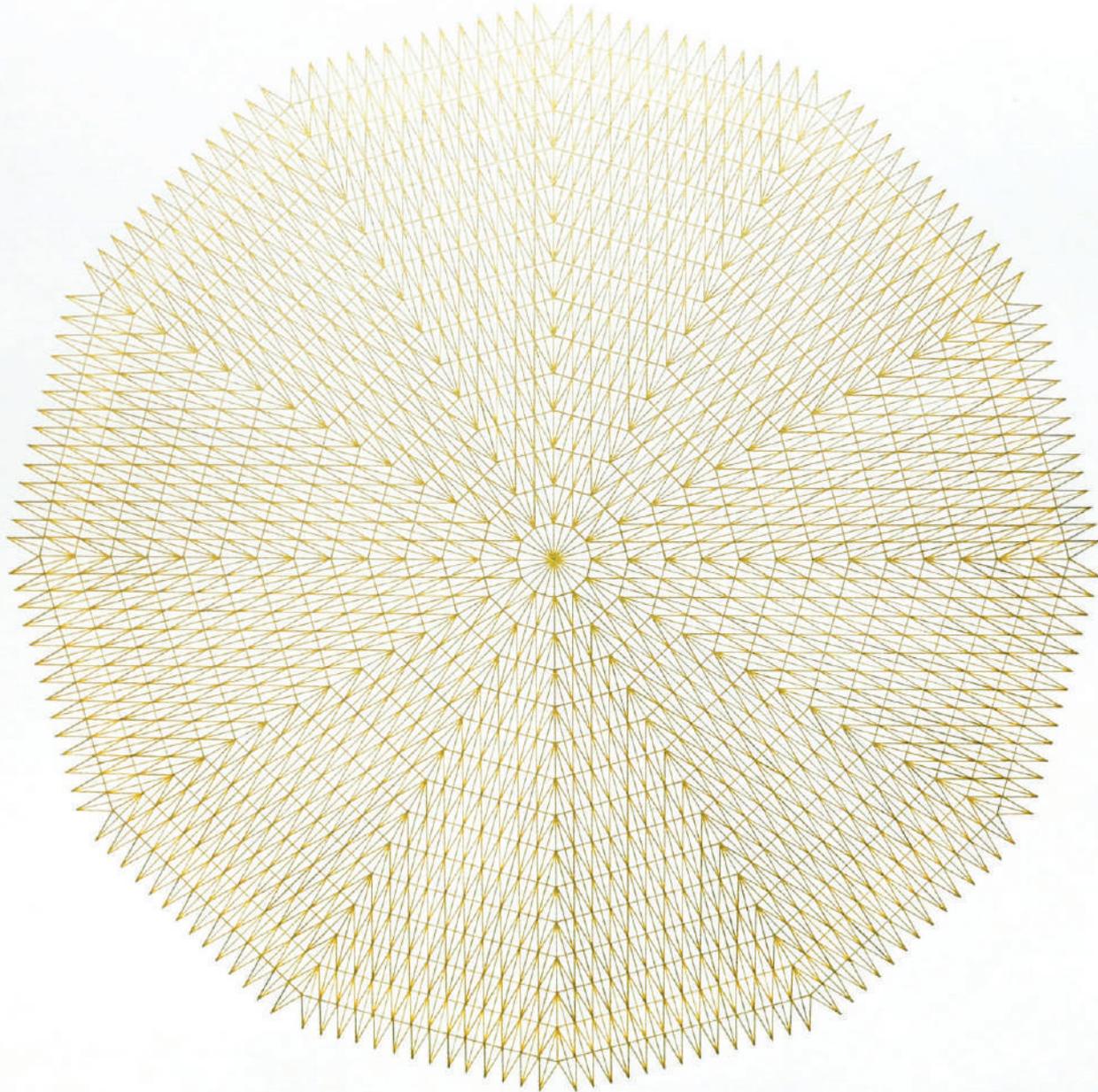


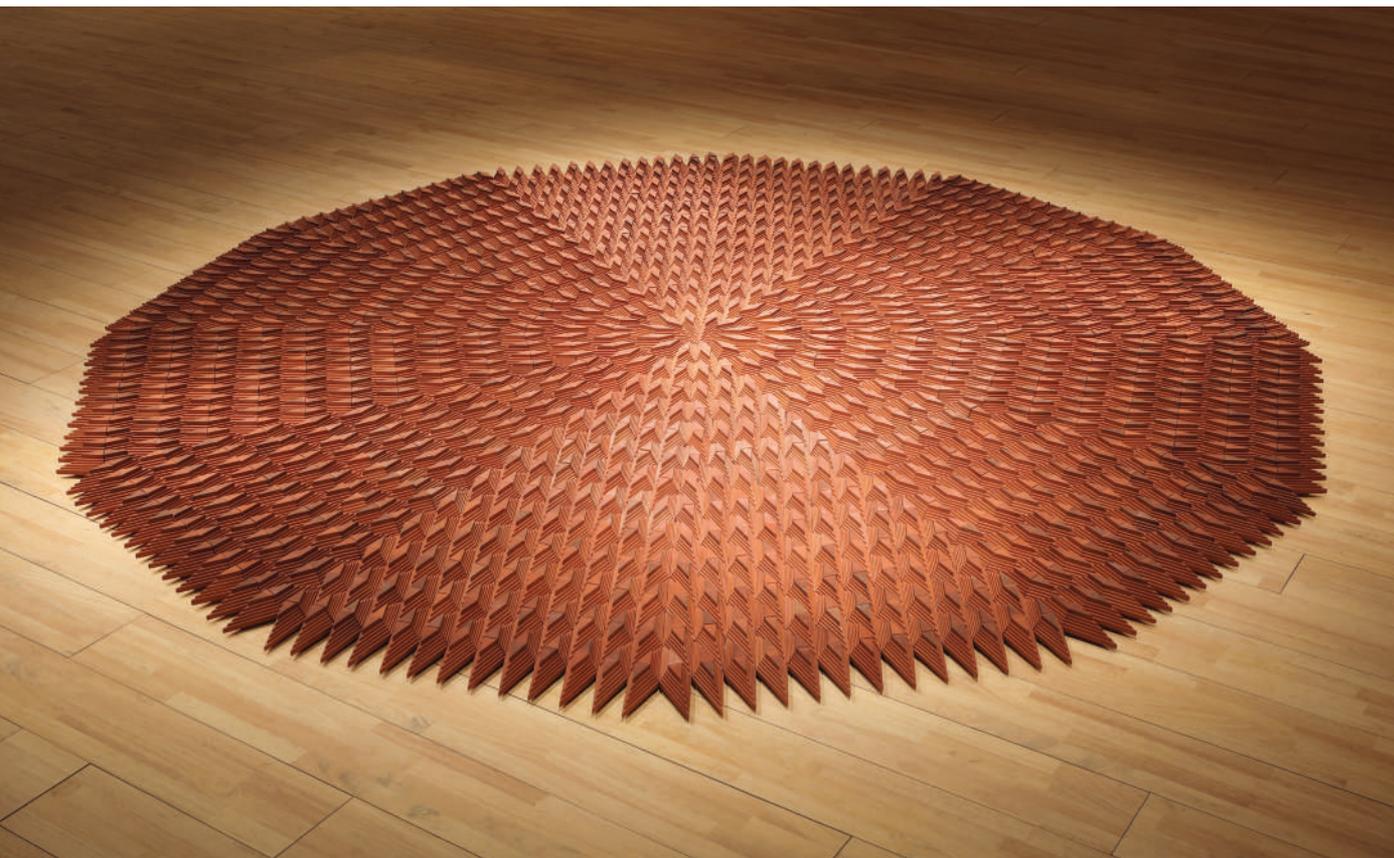
Earthly Radiance, 2016,
ceramic, 120 x 120 cm,
private collection, Indonesia

Both the process of making and the experience of viewing the physical output as an art object are potentially meditative. This 'meditative' quality can be achieved through the repetition of form or action. The principle of repetition is used sometimes to convey religious or spiritual meaning as in the case of the Hindu or Buddhist mandalas. There are many types of mandala patterns in both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, but even though they differ visually according to tradition, there is one recurrent idea in mandalas that fascinates me, and that is the idea of multiplicity or multiple emanation. Multiple emanation refers to the idea that one entity can be multiplied or manifested many times in different forms and different contexts. In Buddhism, there is a concept that there can be many forms of human emanation of the bodhisattvas at the same time. There are the emanations of the mind, speech, body, qualities, and activities of the bodhisattvas. This idea is symbolically represented in the mandala. The mandala is a symbolic representation of the cosmos or the universe and the principle of emanation contained in it points outwards to the idea that the universe, which is multiple, is generated from the One, which is unitary.

Each ceramic work that I make is made through the process of repeatedly casting one or two forms until a certain quantity is reached, so that they can all be arranged into one configuration or pattern according to a symmetrical order. Some of the works are based on the mandala concept, a pattern that radiates and replicates from the center in radial symmetry.

Solar Worship
2015
gold ink on paper
48 x 48 cm





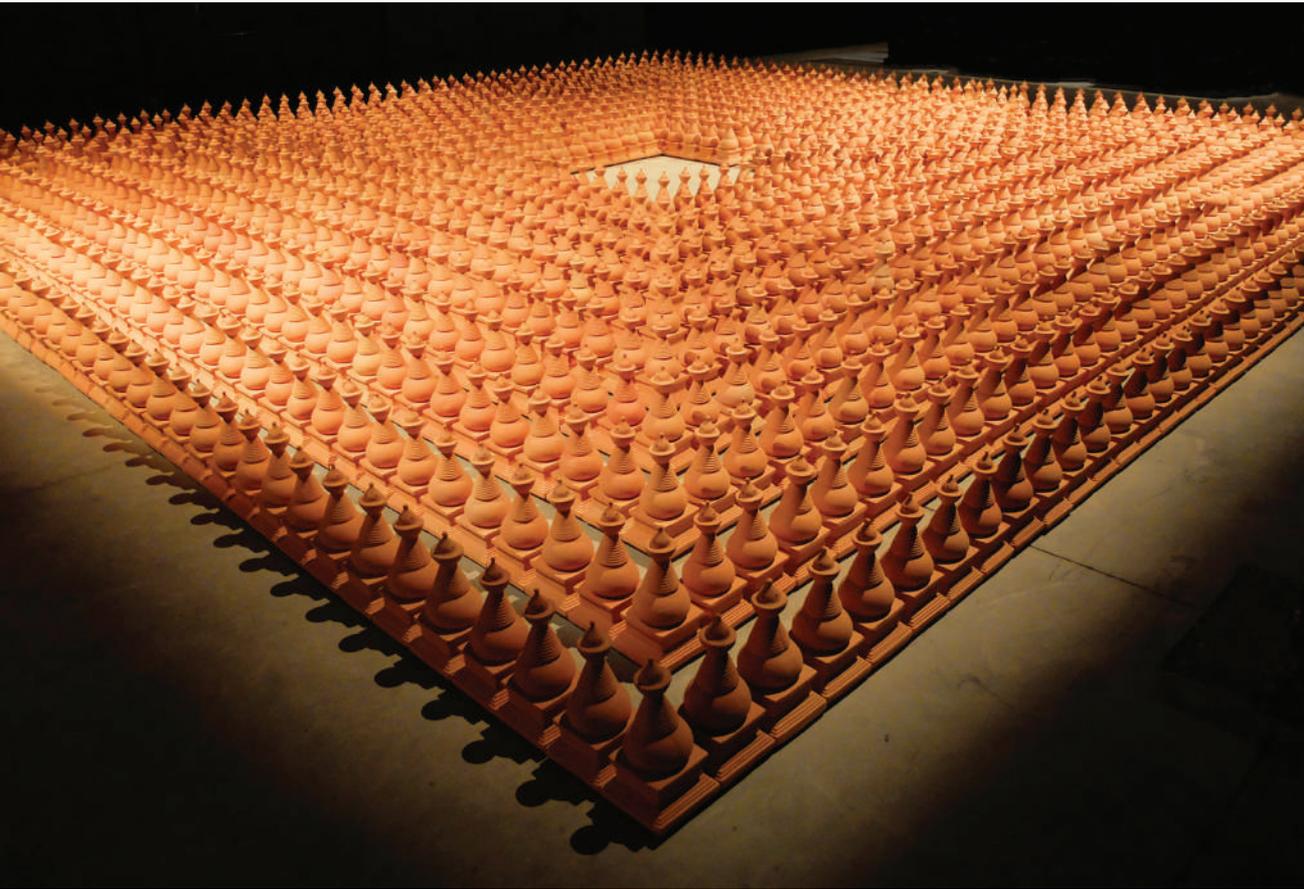
Solar Worship
2015-2019
terracotta
Ø 300 cm
photography by MIYAJIMA Kei, courtesy of
POLA Museum Annex and Mizuma Gallery,
collection of Tumurun Private Museum,
Solo, Indonesia

Repetition

Repetition is often found in ornaments such as the pattern-making in decorative arts where symmetry is commonly used as the principle of visual organization. I see repetition as one of the essential characteristics present in ceramic-making, especially in slip-casting – a method of production that provides ceramicists a way to multiply one single form into an almost indefinite quantity with great facsimile to the original form using plaster moulds. Through its plasticity, clay can be used to replicate almost any shapes available with different levels of complexity depending on the details of the form. Because of its ability to reproduce an object in a timely manner and with a high level of efficiency, slip-casting is often used in a much larger scale by factories to fabricate tableware, crockery, and other domestic objects. That is why it is mostly associated with the monotonous process of mass fabrication rather than the creative process of creating a customized, limited, and one-of-a-kind ceramic art object. The discussion about authenticity and originality is present in the work of many ceramic artists. It is a common belief that ceramic objects produced through slip-casting technique are somehow lacking any of these values.

Helios (detail)
2017
ceramic
436 x 999.5 cm
(approx. 2000 pieces)
collection of Tumurun
Private Museum,
Solo, Indonesia





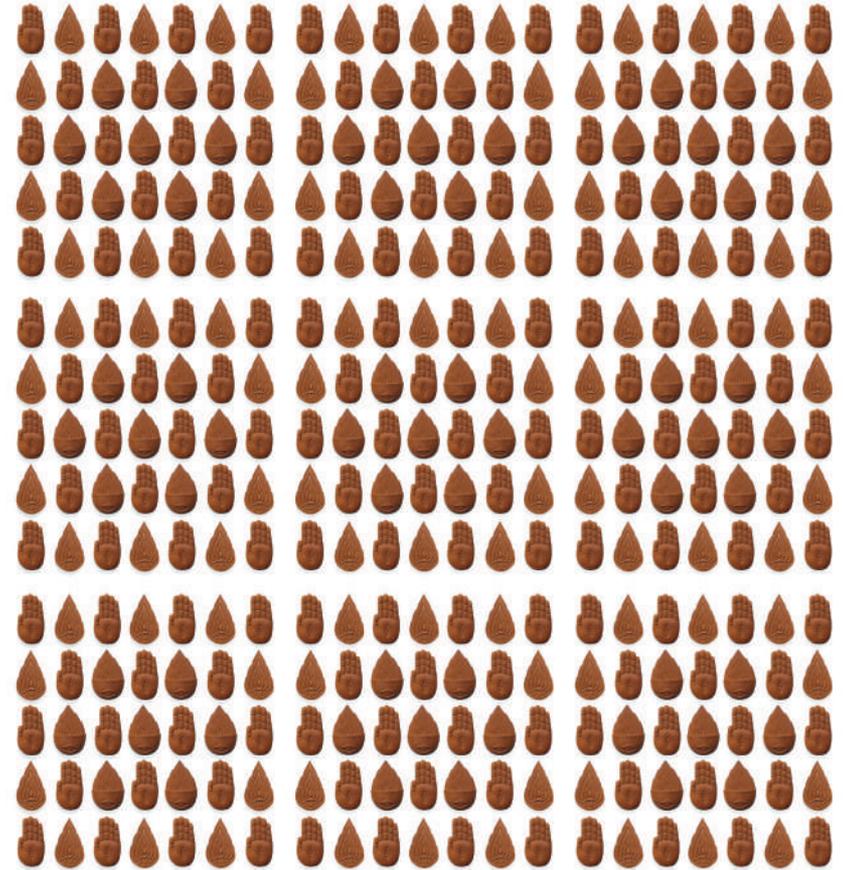
On the other hand, hand-built ceramics may be seen as more authentic because they record the traces of the process and directly involve the hands, hence expressing the unique characteristics of the artist.

Like in any other medium-specific art practice, ceramic-making carries with it some tangible and tactile qualities perceptible by touch. That is why I personally agree with the view that hand-built ceramics may be able to record traces of their making process more accurately and thereby reflect the expression of the artist as a source of authenticity and aesthetic value.

Cosmic Labyrinth - A Silent Pathway, 2013, terracotta, dimensions variable, installation view at the Indonesia Pavilion of the 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, collection of Anna BS Sunindar

However, my work questions the idea that objects produced outside of strictly hand-built processes are secondary or have less authentic value. I believe that tactile value is still present in these semi-manually produced, slip-cast ceramics. In my work, the objects that are used to form one specific pattern may look similar and identical to one another. However, on closer inspection, some slight variations and differences can be seen in each one as a result of cleaning and carving each of the individual objects by hand after casting. The value of a ceramic work cannot only be based on a hierarchical notion of certain technical properties and the aesthetic values they may produce. Ceramics are cultural objects. As a medium, ceramic can be used to convey interesting ideas especially if viewed in a wider cultural context.

I have always been fascinated by the idea of repeating certain actions over and over and over again until eventually it transcends the meaning of that action itself. I see repetition not as something that is necessarily monotonous and invariable. In a set of repeated actions, each action is in itself unique in that very present moment that action is being done. Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but it does change something in the mind which contemplates it.



Levitation, 2019,
terracotta, 168 x 144 cm (315 pieces),
private collection, Sydney, Australia

In this way, the repeated objects or actions may appear to be all the same and nothing is changing, but each time the object is repeated in a series of repetitions, it is as new and unique as its very first. Repetition allows me to become immersed in what I would call an 'art labour', to dedicate myself in a series of repeated actions, and in this case, the act of making the object in an extended period of time. The significance of a medium-based art practice such as ceramic art is that it provides the artist a mode to be in the world by engaging with the medium in the process of art-making. So, as a result of this extensive and intensive engagement with the process, the objects it produces can also record not only traces of the physical involvement of the body but also the state of mind of the maker.

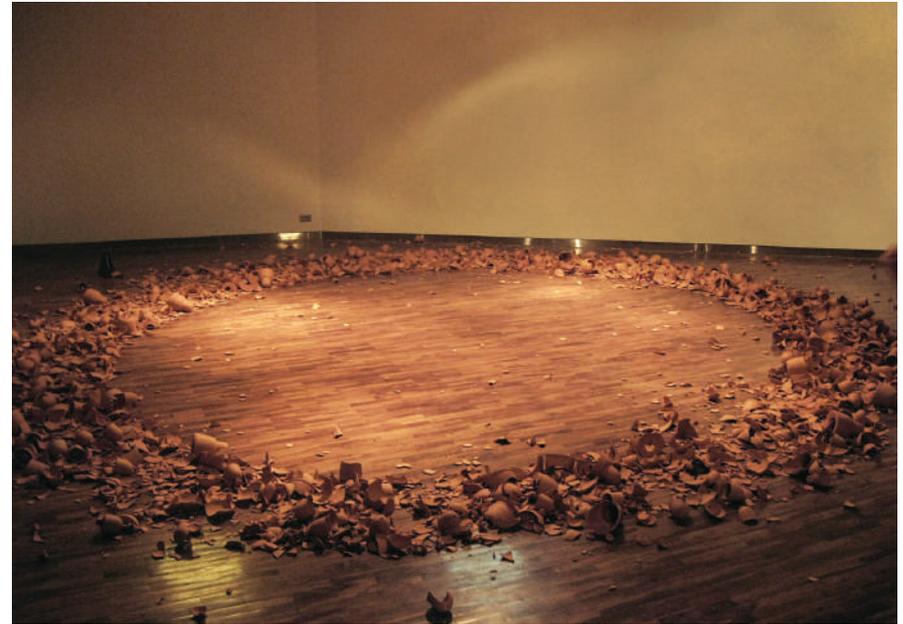
Clay has been used many times by artists to talk about the experience of the corporeal body or the tangible body. But it is also used sometimes as a metaphor of ideas related to human spirituality. One other thing that caught my interest in the first place in working with clay/ceramics besides its own capacity to be shaped into almost anything was that it also involves a process in which the material is transformed into a different physical state.

Levitation (detail), 2019, terracotta, 168 x 144 cm (315 pieces),
photography by Aaron Anderson, courtesy of Sullivan + Strumpf and Mizuma Gallery,
private collection, Sydney, Australia

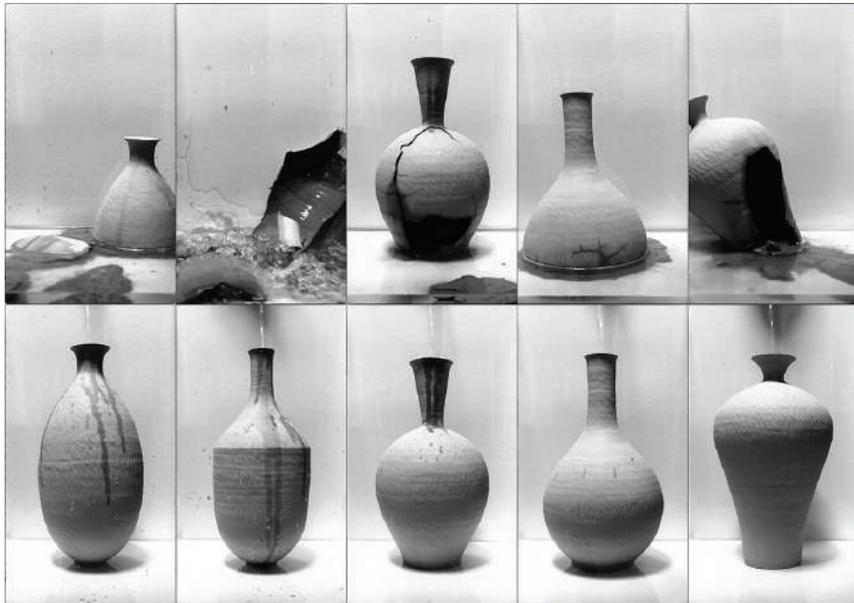
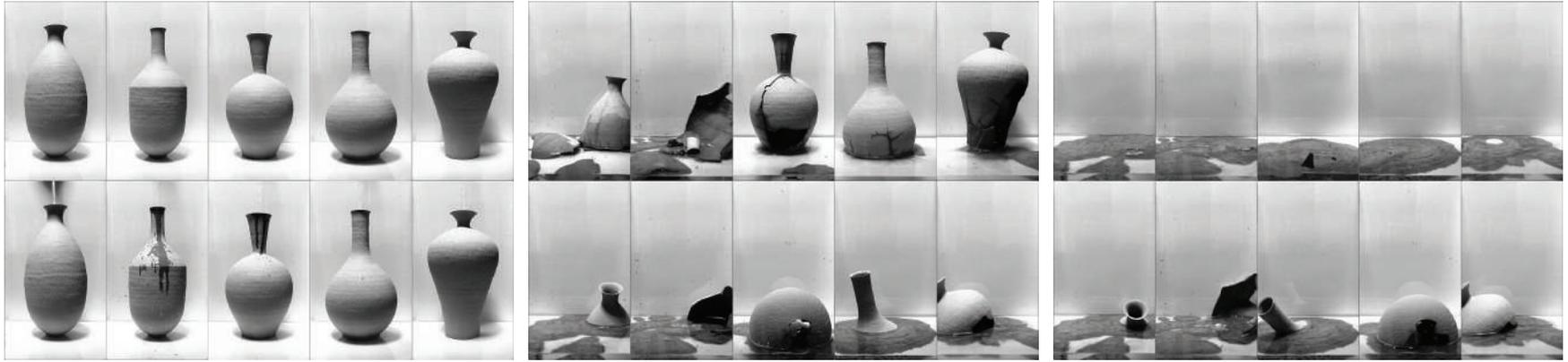




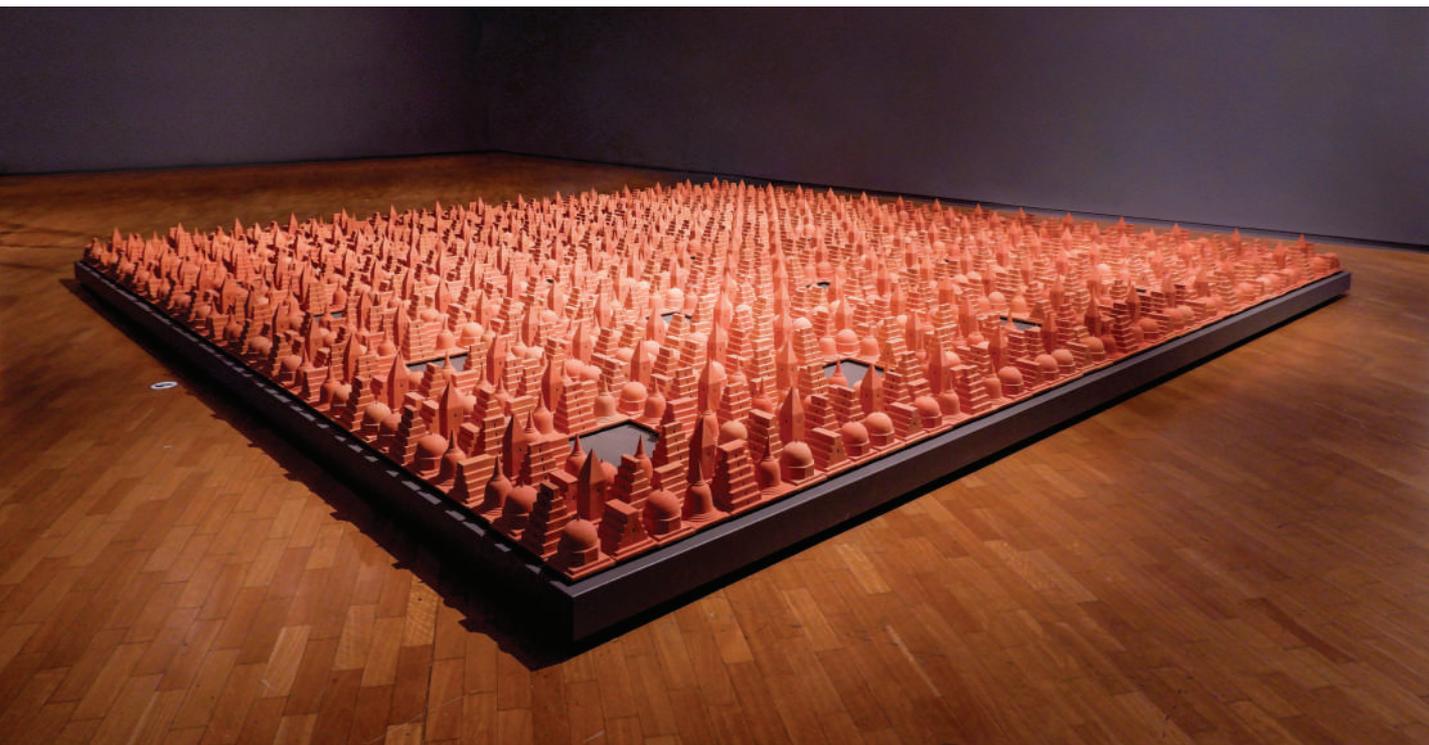
Through the firing process, clay is transformed into ceramics. As a material, even though ceramics still retain some of the mineral initially contained in clay, after the firing it becomes a different form of material with different physical properties—it loses its plasticity, it becomes strong but also fragile so that it could easily break if it strikes another hard object. After firing, clay loses its temporariness and becomes something that is more permanent, especially if it is fired at a really high temperature, with porcelain (1300° C) as an example. All these practical and technical explanations have provided me with a way to think about clay as a metaphor of the transitory nature of our physical existence. I have tried to articulate this idea in several ways in the past, such as a durational performance involving the act of breaking a set of terracotta bells and dissolving a series of unfired clay forms with water, both performances involved video as a way to document the process.



Cosmic Labyrinth - The Bells, 2012, terracotta, dimensions variable, installation view at Galeri Soemardja, ITB, Bandung, Indonesia, collection of Tom Tandio



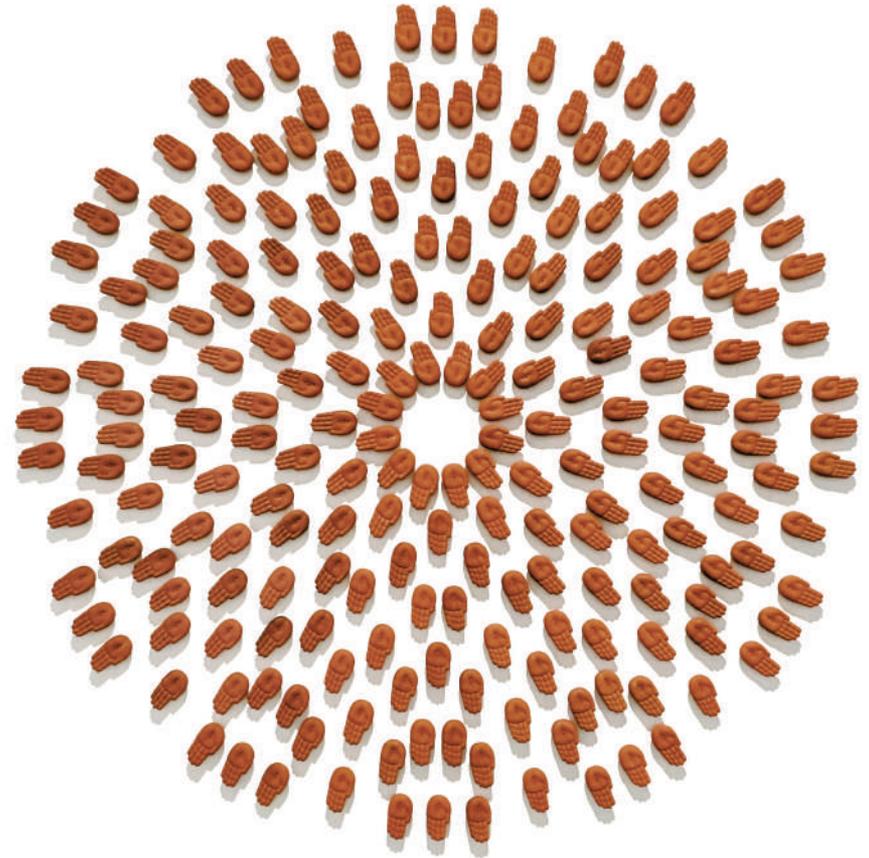
Transitory Nature of Earthly Joy, 2017, five-channel digital video,
20:07, 01:44, 01:50, 02:00, 03:09, 24" Class Full HD LG IPS LED Neo Blade III Monitor,
edition of 2 + 1 AP



Shelters
2019
terracotta, ceramic
540 x 540 x 25 cm
© Albert Yonathan Setyawan,
commission and collection of National Gallery
of Australia, Canberra, Australia

Symmetry

The perception of order and beauty when looking at something symmetrical reflects back on our own physical existence, in which symmetrical order is inherently present in our body. Humans have bilateral body symmetry. In visual structure, symmetry can be perceived as somewhat sterile and rigid while asymmetrical structure on the contrary, is associated with something more dynamic and less predictable. However, I believe there is something more to symmetrical structure than just rigidity and sterility. In decorative arts, symmetry and repetition are facilitated through sequences of objects and images, which can bring about a meditative quality and religious association which transcends the association of visual rigidity. Which forms the basis of the idea behind the title of this exhibition, *Variations on Symmetry*.

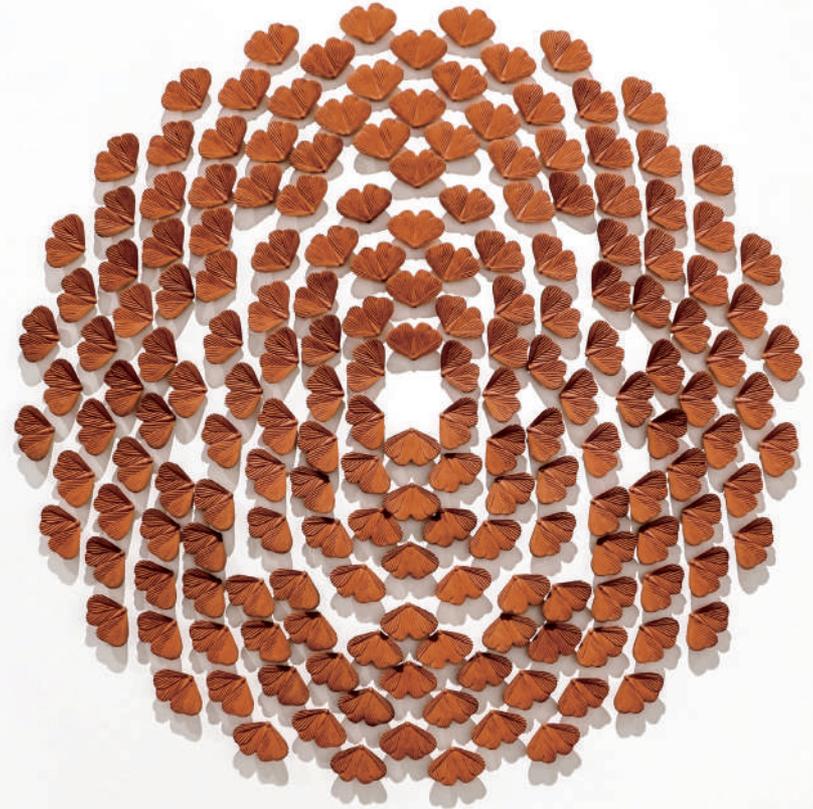


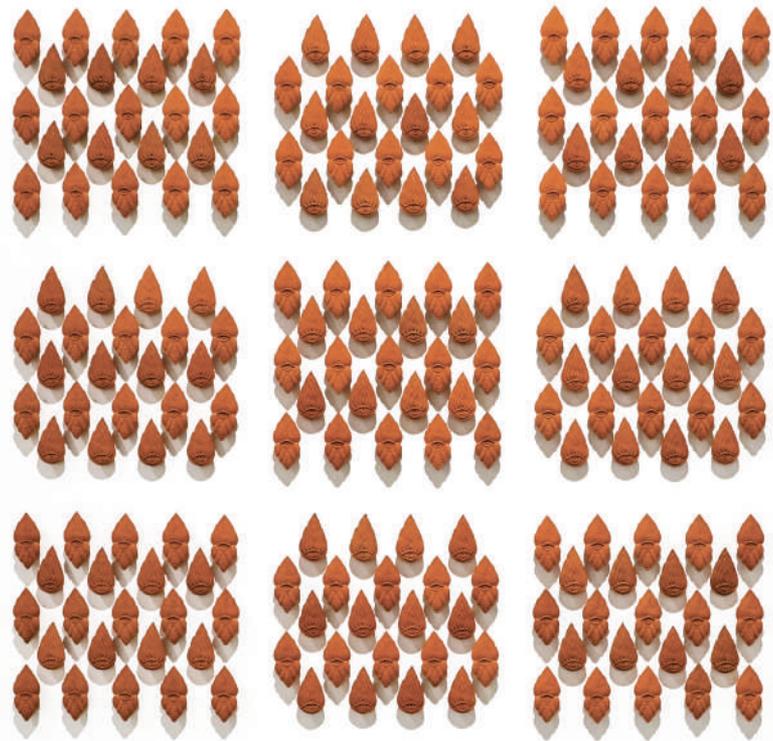
Radiance of Being
2019
terracotta
Ø 152 x 5 cm (216 pieces)



This exhibition presents 12 new works composed of six ceramic works and six gouache drawings on paper. The ceramic works are made of unglazed slip-casted terracotta clay fired in a relatively low temperature (1180° C). Out of these six, four depict a composition arranged based on some variations of radial symmetry and consist of a number of small-size ceramic sculptures reproduced from the same design. Another is based on a square-form mandala diagram and the last consists of two different designs composed sequentially as a monogram pattern. All the shapes are made through the process of abstracting and simplifying images of parts of the human body, animals, plants, and some natural phenomena that are designed in some way so that they could produce some religious or spiritual associations, even though they are not really religious symbols nor have any function in real religious practice. Integrated and composed as patterns, these individual shapes become lost in their own geometric configuration. So, from a certain distance what appears in the eyes of the person looking at it is just symmetrically composed abstract patterns. The drawings show geometric planes consisting of repeated modules.

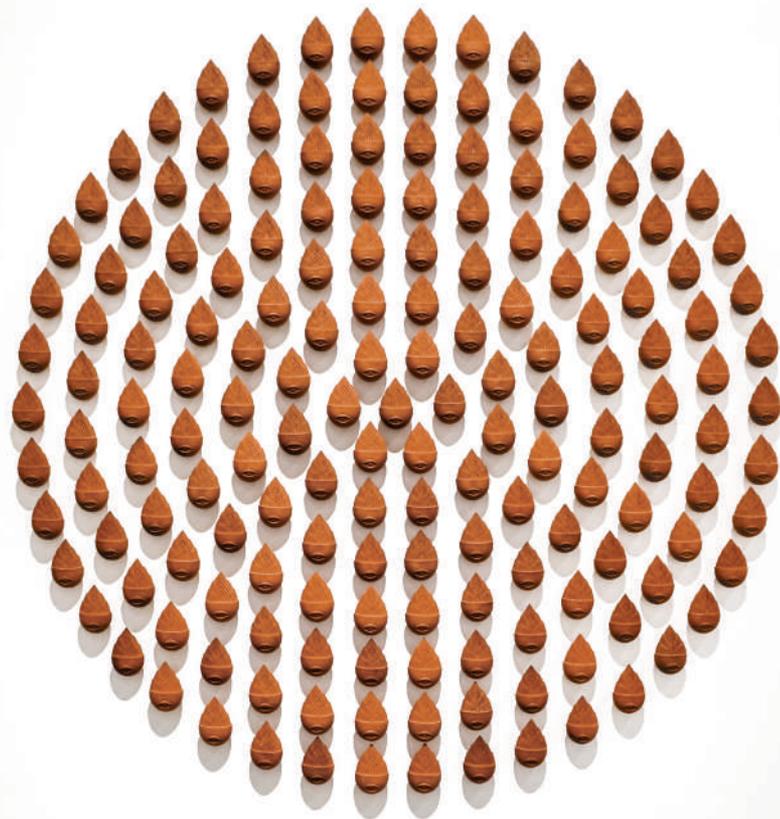
Radial Incantation
2019
terracotta
Ø 132 x 5 cm (162 pieces)





Subliminal Fire Mandala
2019
terracotta
113.5 x 121 x 5 cm (198 pieces)

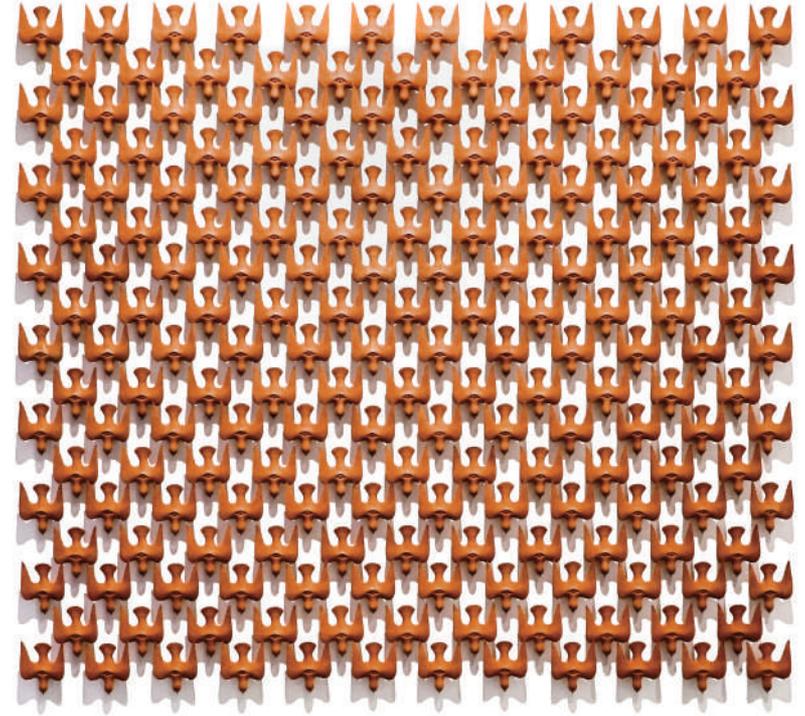




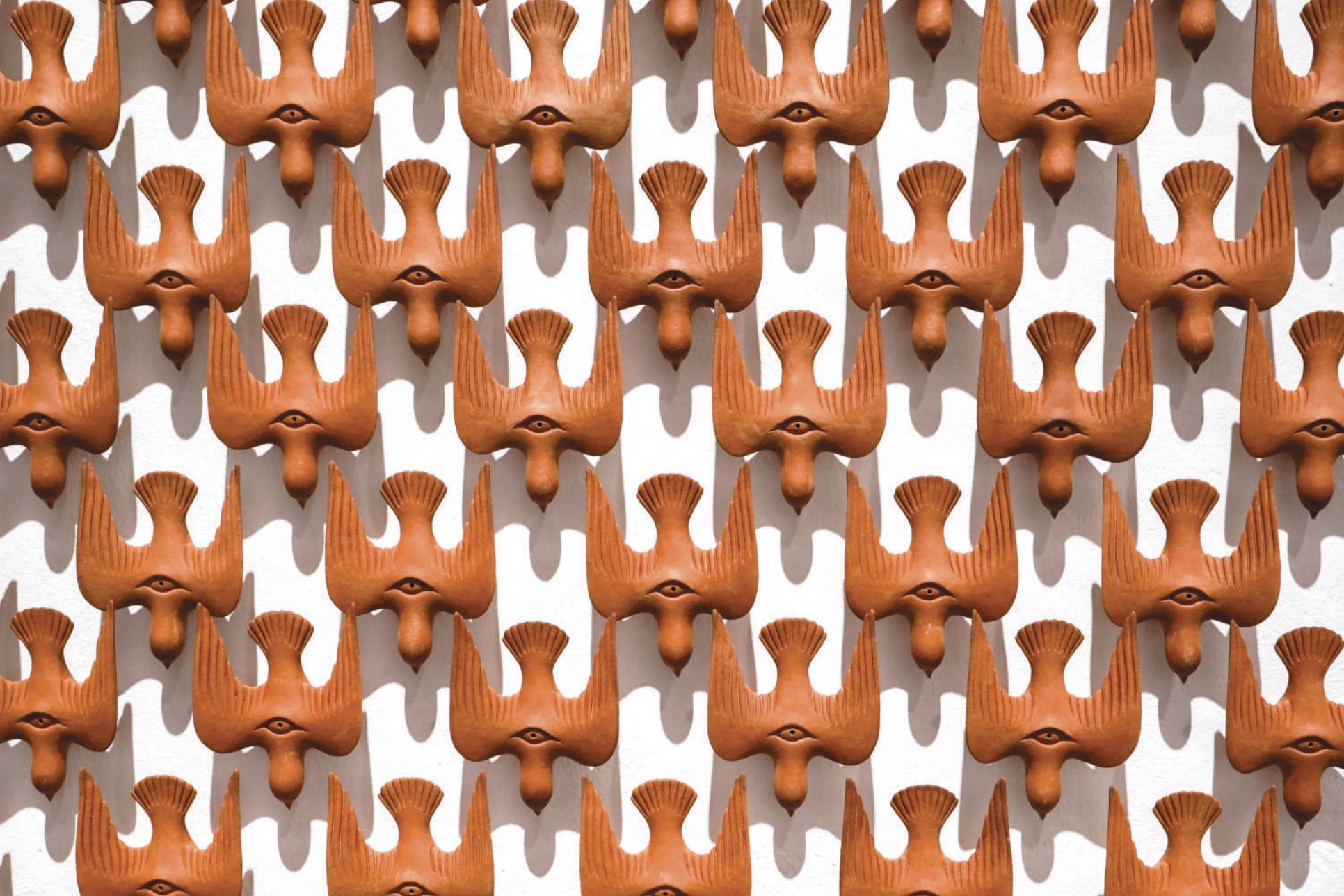
Luminiferous
2019
terracotta
Ø 132 x 5 cm (168 pieces)

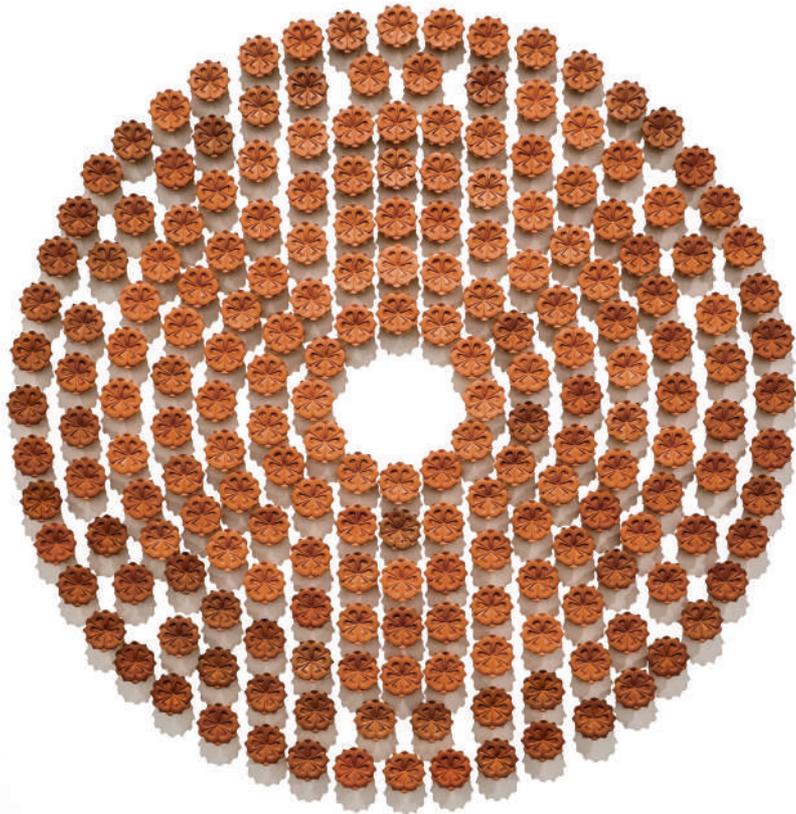
Each of the modules represents architectural components or spaces, it is symmetrically composed to show either single, or two-point perspective. The plane itself does not communicate any clear perspective and once the module is repeated, the intersection of spaces in between the modules creates ambiguous and contradictory spaces. I wanted to create a composition where the lines between two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes or spaces are blurred, creating somehow a dizzying view to the audience.

Regarding the choice of using unglazed terracotta - terracotta is a common material used by many indigenous potters in Indonesia to produce domestic objects and there is something really mundane about it. It is a very simple material to work with and it does not require any complicated methods of firing. There is an austerity and modesty in its simplicity. There is no artificial layer covering its surface. The red color comes from the presence of iron oxide contained in it that turns into various shades of color from light yellow or orange to dark red or brown. Iron oxide is widespread in nature and plays an important role in many geological and biological processes, therefore its presence can be found to various degrees in almost all types of clay with the exception of highly vitreous porcelain.



Seers
2019
terracotta
115 x 117 x 5 cm (196 pieces)



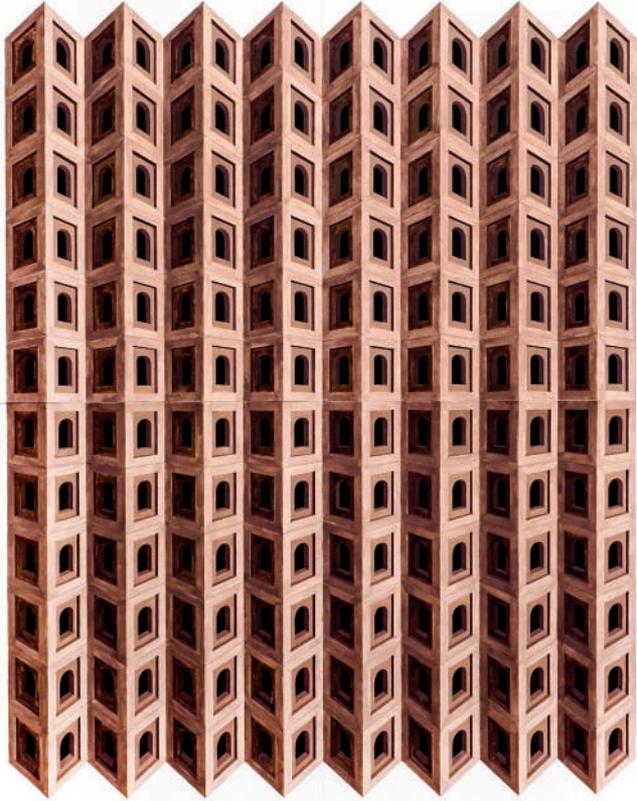


Hypnos
2019
terracotta
Ø 132 x 5 cm (204 pieces)

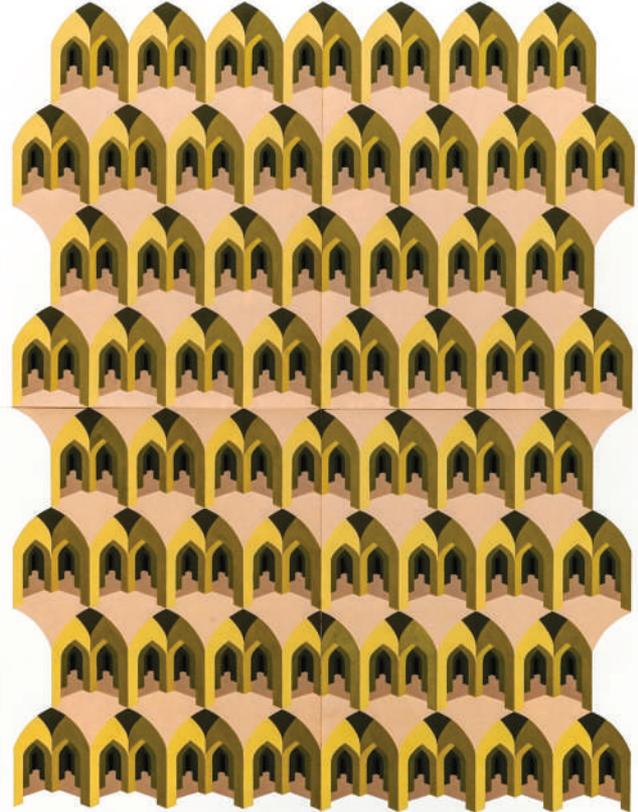
Terracotta or earthenware produces a uniform tone and texture, and also there is something really 'human' about its physicality, perhaps it is because to some level it still retains some of its previous features as clay.

This text forms an exegesis of my practice which I consider to be in the domain of ceramic art. However, I also consider my practice as diverse as I am open to working with different mediums and with different methods. I think, to consider ceramic art in a much wider context, for example in the context of material culture, is to open up more possibilities of engaging with various issues through that particular medium itself. This will be the challenge for any practitioner rooted in medium-specific art practices in an increasingly diverse world of post-studio contemporary art practices.

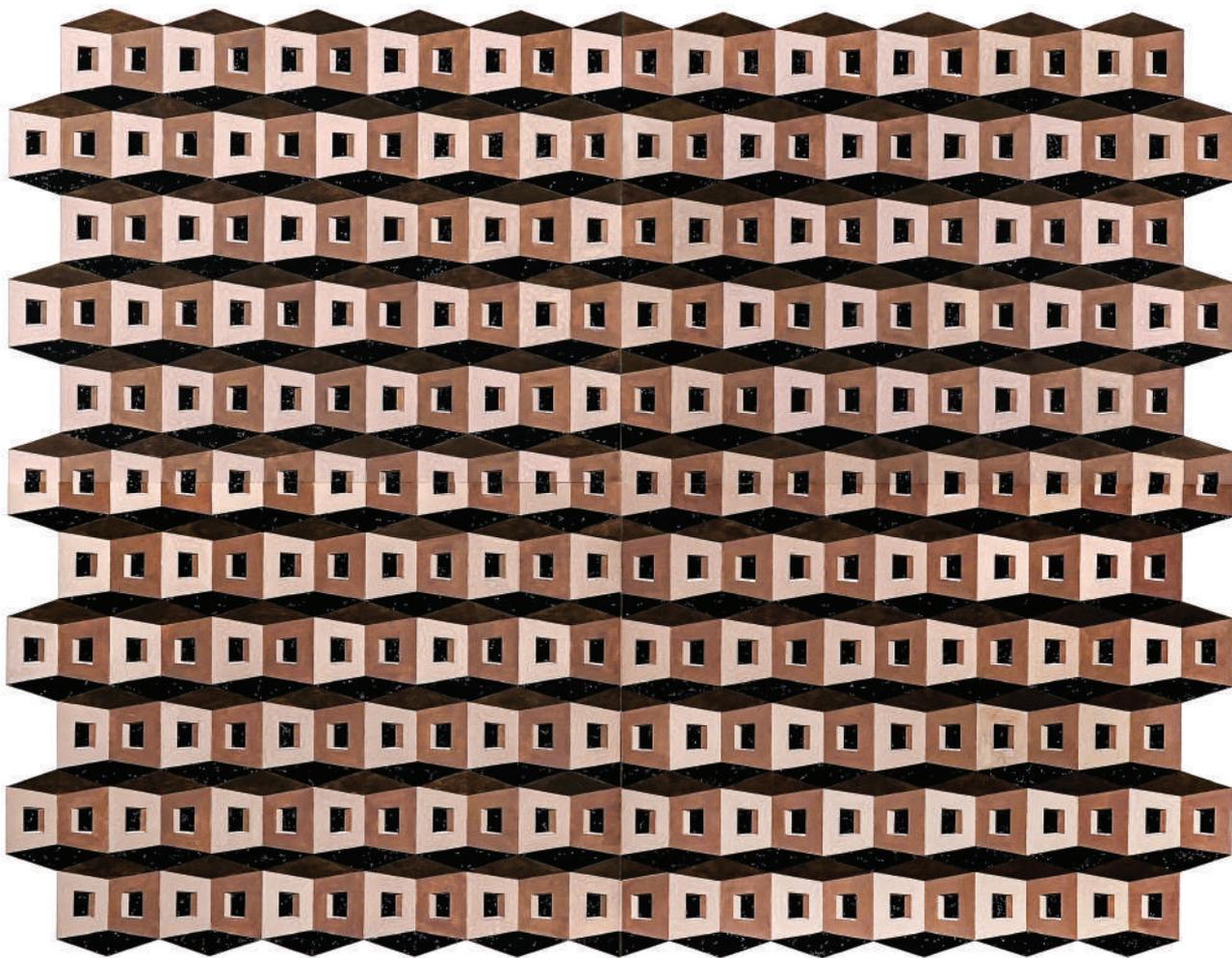
17 October 2019



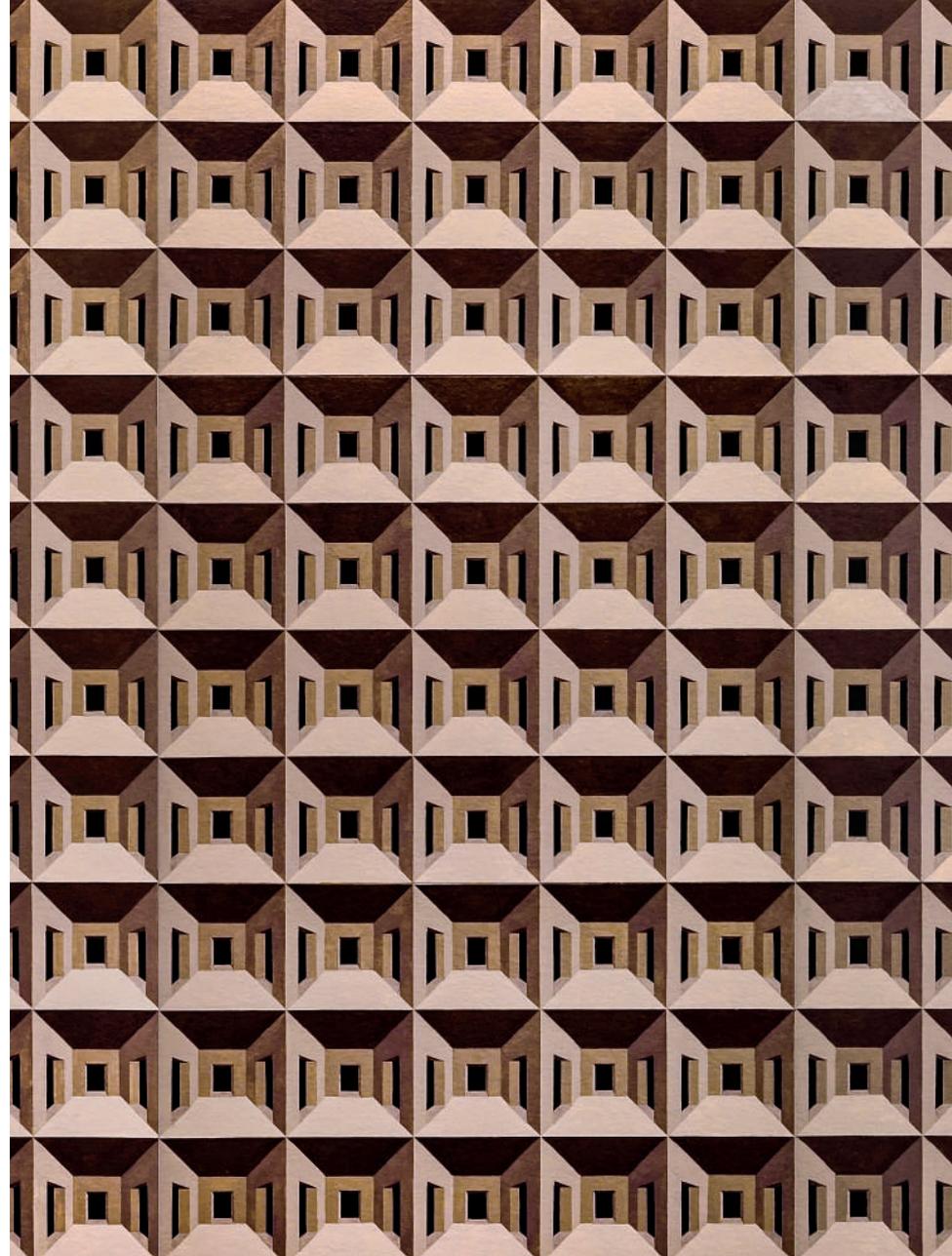
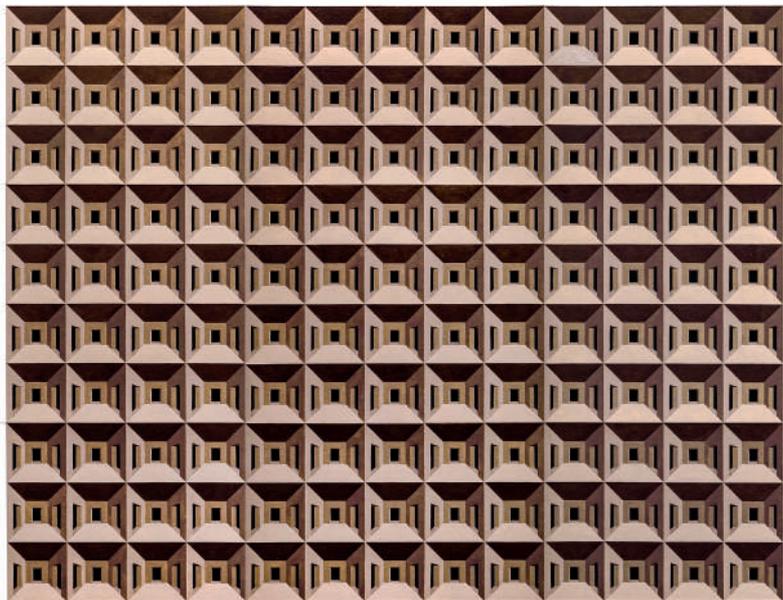
Spectral Tower
2019
gouache on paper
90.5 x 72.5 cm (framed), 84 x 64 cm (unframed)



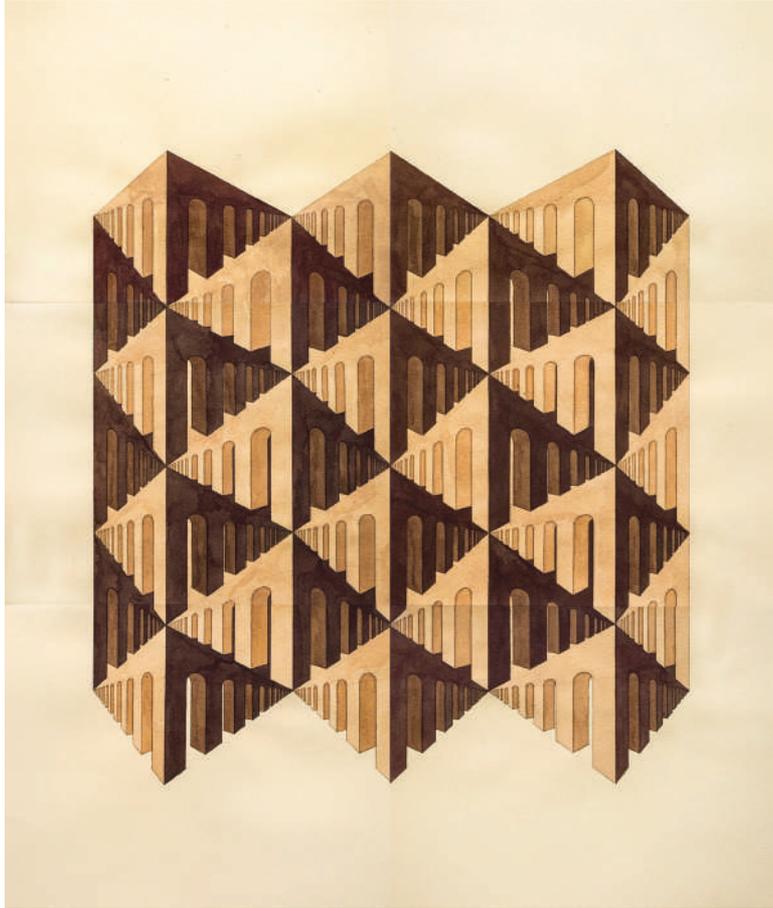
Hallucinatory Archway
2019
gouache on paper
90.5 x 72.5 cm (framed), 82 x 64 cm (unframed)



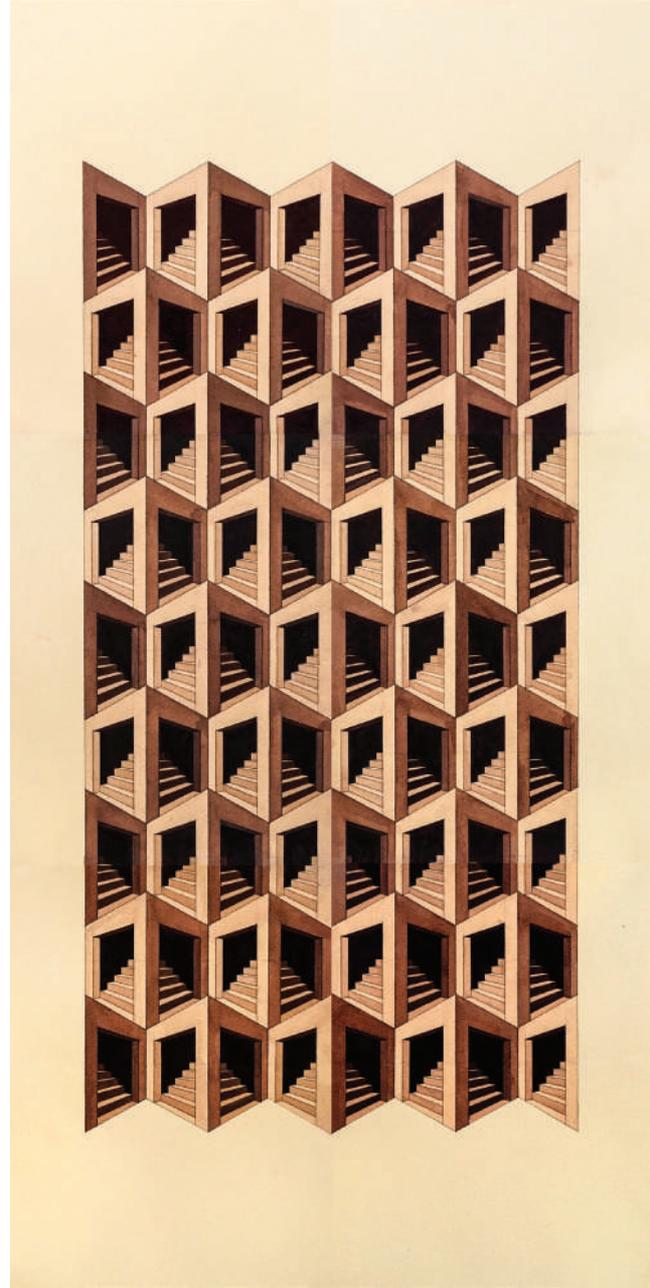
Mind Tessellation
2019
gouache on paper
72 x 90.5 cm (framed), 64 x 82 cm (unframed)



Phantom Chambers
2019
gouache on paper
78 x 95.5 cm (framed), 69 x 87 cm (unframed)



Mind Corridors
2019
gouache on paper
77.5 x 66.5 cm (framed), 66.5 x 57 cm (unframed)



Vertigo Hypnosis Portals
2019
gouache on paper
102.5 x 55 cm (framed),
93 x 46 cm (unframed)

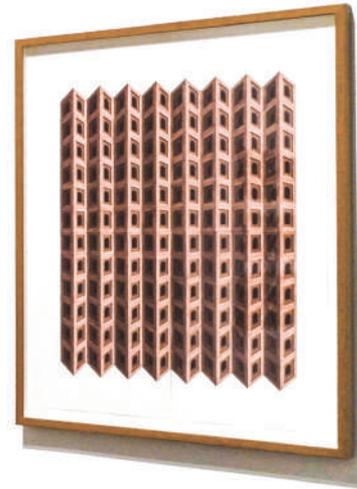
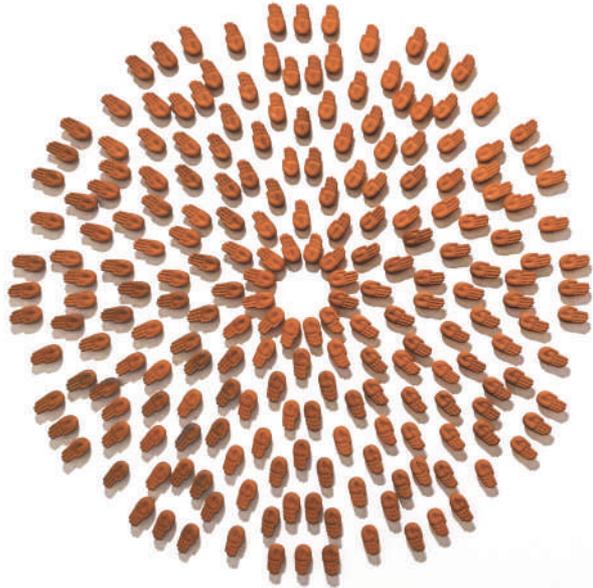
VARIATIONS ON SYMMETRY
Albert Vorathnan Setyawan
01 October – 10 December 2019

The exhibition is in some ways a form of reflection and a meditation on the relationship between mathematics, geometry, and aesthetics. It is a journey of discovery, a quest for the beauty of symmetry in the natural world, and a celebration of the human mind's ability to create and understand it. The exhibition is a journey of discovery, a quest for the beauty of symmetry in the natural world, and a celebration of the human mind's ability to create and understand it.

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Albert Vorathnan Setyawan is a multidisciplinary artist and designer. He has worked in various fields, including architecture, interior design, and product design. His work is characterized by a strong sense of symmetry and a deep understanding of geometry. He has exhibited his work in various galleries and museums, and his work has been featured in several publications. He is currently based in Jakarta, Indonesia.





Exhibition view at Mizuma Gallery, Singapore



Albert Yonathan Setyawan

Born in Bandung, Indonesia, 1983
Lives and works in Kyoto and Tokyo, Japan

Education

- 2016 – Present PhD. Program Candidate, Ceramic Art Department, Kyoto Seika University, Kyoto, Japan
- 2014 – 2016 Post Graduate in Ceramic Art Department, Kyoto Seika University, Kyoto, Japan
- 2012 – 2014 Research Student in Ceramic Art Department, Kyoto Seika University, Kyoto, Japan
- 2010 – 2012 MFA, Ceramic Art Studio Program, Faculty of Art & Design, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2002 – 2007 BFA, Ceramic Art Studio Program, Faculty of Art & Design, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung, Indonesia

Solo Exhibitions

- 2019 *Variations on Symmetry*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- 2017 *Terrene*, POLA Museum Annex, Tokyo, Japan
- 2016 *Terrene*, Strathnairn Arts Association, Canberra, Australia
- 2015 *Apotheose*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- 2014 *Enshrined*, Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2012 *Sacred Veranda*, Galeri Soemardja, Bandung, Indonesia
- Grammar of Meditation*, Galeri Canna, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Cosmic Totems*, WTF Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
- 2011 *Temple of Threshold*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Singapore
- 2010 *Cosmic Mantra*, SIGlarts Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Liminal Being*, The Japan Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2009 *I am a bird now*, Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, Koka City, Shiga, Japan

Group Exhibitions

- 2019 *TROPOSPHERE: Materials to open up a new world*, Kyocera Museum, Kyoto, Japan (forthcoming)

- ASEAN Crafts: From Heritage to Contemporary*, The ASEAN Culture House, Busan, South Korea
- Contemporary Worlds: Indonesia*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
- Future Past: Tradition and Transgression in Contemporary Art from Asia*, Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney, Australia
- SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now*, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
- 2018 *Radiance*, Albert Yonathan Setyawan & Miyanaga Aiko, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2018*, Tokamachi, Niigata, Japan
- DISINI Festival 2018*, Gillman Barracks, Singapore
- 2017 *Folkloristics*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- 2016 *Y: Collect 2.0*, Ruci Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Tom Tandio - The Man Who Fell into Art: Collecting as a Form of Personal Narrative*, SongEun ArtSpace, Seoul, South Korea
- Constituent Concreteeness*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- MULTIPLE JUNCTURES*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- Kyoto Seika University – Final Graduation Exhibition*, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan
- 2015 *Kyoto Seika University – Graduate Program Exhibition*, Kyoto, Japan
- Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan*
- 2015 Contemporary Asian Ceramics*, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China
- Rev/Action: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, United States
- Unveiling Fundamentals in Contemporary Art Through Asia*, OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia
- 2014 *Transmission*, Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok, Thailand
- Contemporary Ceramic Art in Asia 2014*, Clayarch Gimhae Museum, Gimhae, South Korea
- Sekai to Hontou no Houhou – Mite Kiite Kanjiru Tougei*, Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan
- 2013 “Sakti” Indonesia Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2013, Venice, Italy
- 2012 *Panorama: Recent Art from Contemporary Asia*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- 2011 *1001 Doors*, Ciputra Marketing Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Survey 2.10*, Edwin’s Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Ekspansi - Pameran Besar Seni Patung*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
- la composition séduisante*, Edwin’s Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

- 2010 *The Equator – Biennale Jogja XI*, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Tribute to S.Sudjojono – Sang Ahli Gambar dan Kawan-kawan, PLATFORM 3, Bandung, Indonesia
Critical Point, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
15 x 15 x 15 #3, Galeri Soemardja, Bandung, Indonesia
Halimun | The Mist – Inaugural Exhibition for Lawang Wangi Art & Science Estate, Lawang Wangi, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2009 *Jakarta Contemporary Ceramic Biennale #1*, North Art Space, Ancol, Jakarta, Indonesia
Crossroads (part of residency program from The Japan Foundation), Warehouse Bungoro Gallery, Shigaraki, Japan
POST, Place Gallery, Richmond, Victoria, Australia
We're All Millionaires, A.O.D Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia
Survey #2, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Contemporary Archaeology, SIGlarts Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Revisiting The Last Supper, CG artspace, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2008 *Bandung Art Now*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
Apocalypse Now!, ARK Galerie, Jakarta, Indonesia
Himpunan Senyap, Emmitan CA Gallery, Surabaya, Indonesia
Bandung New Emergence vol. 2, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia
Invasi Bandung, Galeri Canna, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2007 *Inner Object*, Potluck Coffeebar and Library, Bandung, Indonesia
Neo-Nation – Biennale Jogja IX, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Demi Mas(s)a, Pameran Seni Rupa Nusantara, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Collections

Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
 POLA Museum Annex, Tokyo, Japan
 Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan
 OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia
 Tumurun Private Museum, Solo, Indonesia
 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia

Residencies

2016 Strathnairn Arts Association, Canberra, Australia

Variations on Symmetry

Albert Yonathan Setyawan
 31 October – 15 December 2019

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 www.mizuma.shop
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 General Manager: Fredy Chandra
 Gallery Manager: Theresia Irma
 Gallery Liaison: Cai Yun Teo, Marsha Tan

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 Artwork Images © Albert Yonathan
 Setyawan, courtesy of the artist and
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MIZUMA GALLERY

Executive Director Sueo Mizuma established Mizuma Art Gallery in Tokyo in 1994. Since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, the gallery aims for the promotion of East Asian artists in the region as well as the introduction of Southeast Asian artists to the international art scene. In 2014, the artist residency space "Rumah Kijang Mizuma" opened in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to create a new platform for dialogue by supporting exchanges between East Asian and Southeast Asian artists. In 2018, a new gallery space, "Mizuma, Kips & Wada Art" opened in New York, USA, as a shared collaboration between Mizuma Gallery from Tokyo and Singapore, Kips Gallery from New York, and Wada Garou from Tokyo.

Mizuma Gallery features the works of Japanese artists including Aida Makoto, Aiko Miyanaga, Amano Yoshitaka, Ikeda Manabu, Tenmyouya Hisashi, and Yamaguchi Akira. Moreover, it showcases the works of renowned East Asian artists such as Ai Weiwei, Du Kun, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Ken + Julia Yonetani, and Zhao Zhao. The gallery also features the creations of prominent and emerging artists from the region including Agan Harahap, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Angki Purbandono, Entang Waharso, Gilang Fradika, Heri Dono, indieguerillas, Made Wianta, Mark Justiniani, Nasirun, Robert Zhao Renhui, and Zen Teh. Mizuma Gallery participates regularly in various regional and international art fairs.

GILLMAN BARRACKS

Set in a former military barracks dating back to 1936 and surrounded by lush tropical greenery, the Gillman Barracks visual arts cluster was launched in September 2012. Jointly developed by government agencies, the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB), the National Arts Council (NAC) and the JTC Corporation (JTC), Gillman Barracks' vision is to be Asia's destination for the presentation and discussion of international and Southeast Asian art. For more information, please visit www.gillmanbarracks.com

